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March 2026

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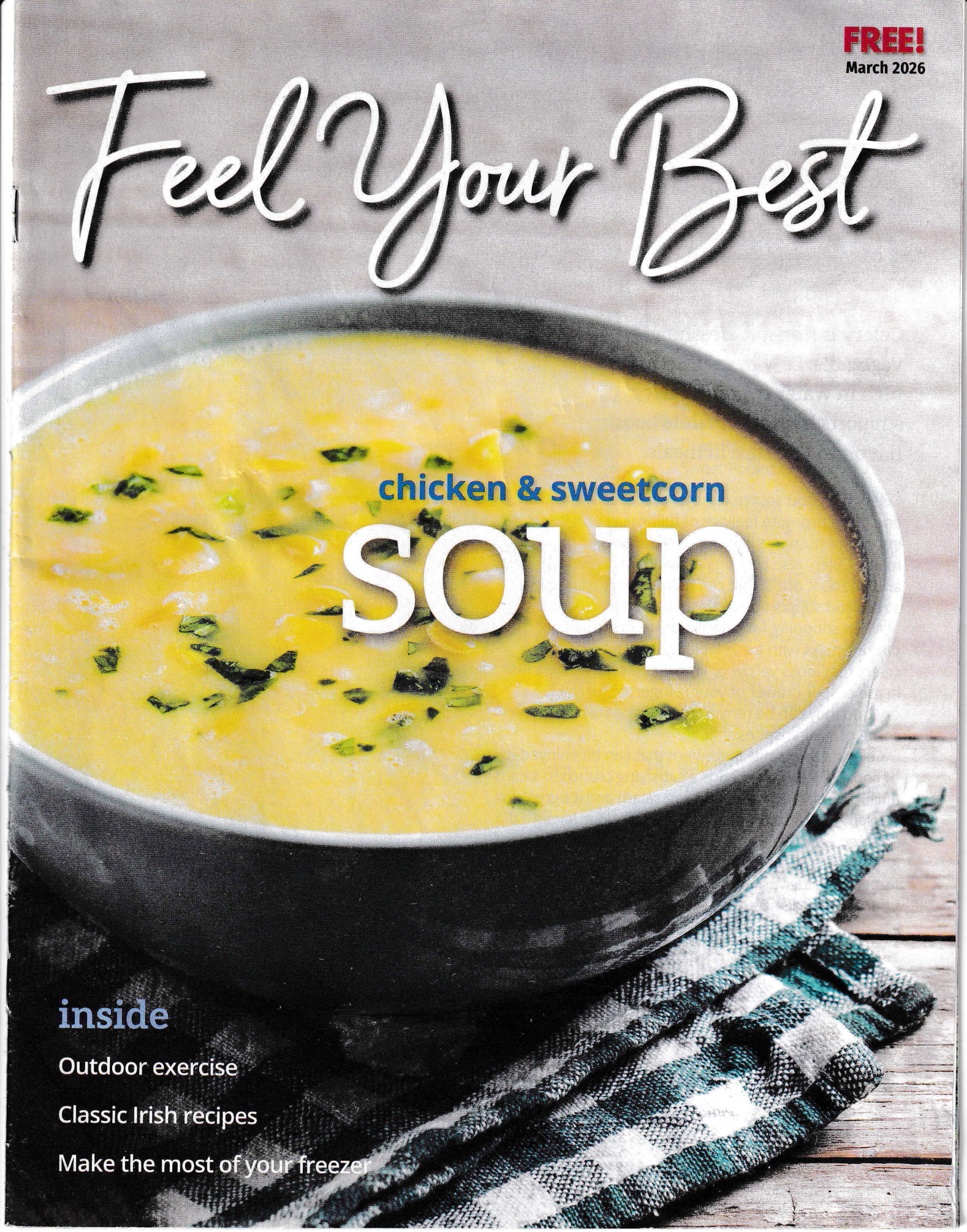


chicken & sweetcorn soup

inside

Outdoor exercise

Classic Irish recipes

Make the most of your freezer

celery

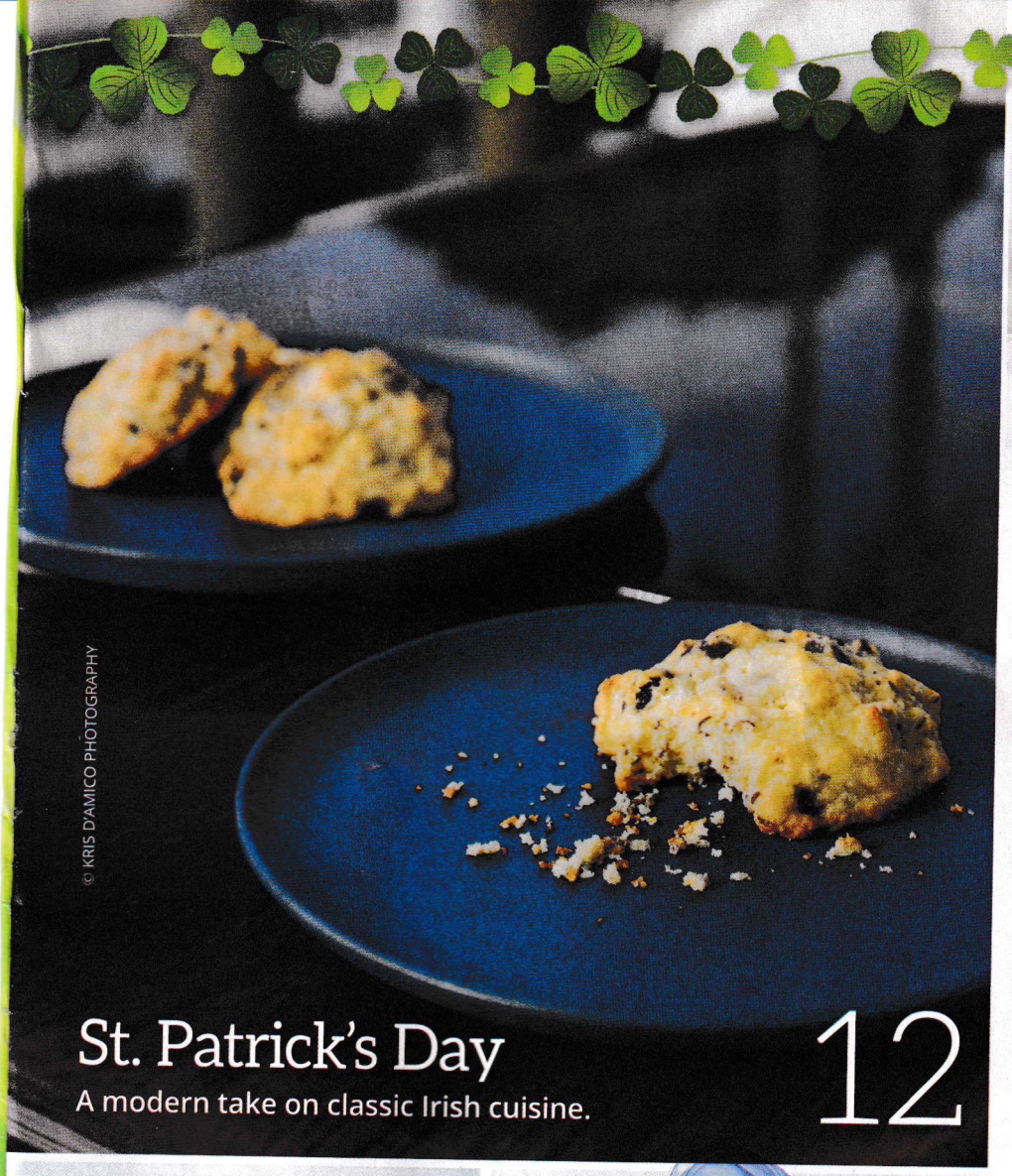
Celery is a crisp, refreshing vegetable. Low in calories and high in water content, celery supports hydration while boosting flavor and texture in meals.

Celery is a good source of fiber, which aids digestion and helps promote feelings of fullness. It provides important nutrients like vitamin K, potassium, and folate. Celery also contains antioxidants, like flavonoids and phenolic acids, that can help combat oxidative stress and support cardiovascular health.

When shopping for celery, choose firm, tightly packed stalks with fresh-looking, leafy tops. Skip celery that looks yellow or limp. Keep celery unwashed in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator. If the stalks dry out, they can be rehydrated in ice water to restore some of their crispness.

Celery is a versatile ingredient that can be enjoyed raw or cooked. Raw celery adds a satisfying crunch to salads (including chicken salad and egg salad) and it's great for dunking in hummus, peanut butter, or your favorite dip. Sautéed celery makes a great addition to soups, stews, and stuffing. Instead of throwing out leftover celery leaves, consider using them like fresh herbs to garnish your favorite dishes.

SELECTED SOURCES **"6 health benefits of celery,"** Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials, https://health.ClevelandClinic.org, 6/23/25 • **"Celery: Not just for veggie trays,"** Mayo Clinic Health System, www.MayoClinicHealthSystem.org, 6/2/23 • **"A review of the antioxidant activity of celery (apium graveolens l),"** by W. Kooti and N. Daraei, *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 7/13/17



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St. Patrick's Day

A modern take on classic Irish cuisine.

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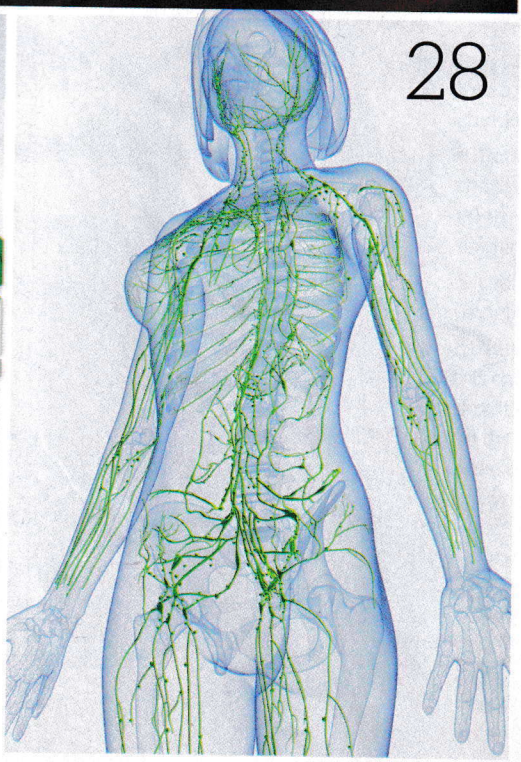

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A NOTE ON RECIPES
Nutritional analysis from Edamam. Nutritional values vary depending on portion size, freshness of ingredients, storage, and cooking techniques. They should be used only as a guide. Star ratings are based on standard values (SVs) that are currently recommended: ★★★★★ Extraordinary (50 percent or better), ★★★★ Top source, ★★★ Excellent source, ★★ Good source, ★ Fair source

RECIPE KEY
D Dairy Free · G Gluten Free · N Nut Free · V Vegan · V Vegetarian

© JESSICA KALMAN

Peanutty Rainbow Chard & Sweet Potato Chowder DG

50 min prep time
serves **4**

From ***My Best Friend Is Gluten Free*** by Jannell Lo ($30, Appetite by Random House, 2025)

- 2 Tbsp neutral high-heat cooking oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 yellow onion, diced
- 1 jalapeño, minced (keep seeds for extra spice)
- 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 c unsalted chicken stock or vegetable stock
- 1 (14 oz) can full-fat coconut milk
- 1 (28 oz) can diced tomatoes, with their juice
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp Thai red curry paste
- ½ c chunky peanut butter, or ¼ c smooth peanut butter + ¼ c chopped peanuts
- 4-6 stalks rainbow chard, shredded
- Fresh cilantro and/or scallions, chopped (optional)
- ½ lime, cut into wedges

1. In a medium stock pot or Dutch oven, heat oil on medium heat until it shimmers. Add garlic, onions, and jalapeños. Sauté for 2 minutes or until fragrant. Add sweet potatoes and sauté for 2 to 3 minutes, until just starting to soften.

2. Stir in stock, coconut milk, tomatoes, salt, and curry paste. Bring to a boil, and then reduce heat to low and simmer for 12 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until sweet potatoes are fork-tender. Turn off heat.

3. Using an immersion blender in the pot, blend soup until just thickened and chunky. (Or ladle half of soup into a stand blender and blend, leaving it thick and chunky, and then return soup to pot.)

4. Return soup to low heat. Stir in peanut butter and chard and simmer for 5 to 6 minutes, stirring a few times, until liquid has reduced slightly and chard is tender.

5. Ladle into soup bowls and garnish with cilantro (if using) and lime wedges.

Kitchen Note: Like the Thai favorite Panang curry, this chowder is peanutty and fragrant, making it simultaneously rich and bright. Sweet potatoes make up the bulk of the soup and add a delicate sweetness, while the rainbow chard brings pops of green, pink, and yellow throughout. The result is hearty and vibrant—a great pick-me-up when you need a lift. For peanut allergies, use an alternative nut butter or tahini instead of peanut butter.

Per serving (made with avocado oil and 1/2 cup cilantro): 619 Calories, 16 g Protein, 0 mg Cholesterol, 45 g Carbohydrates, 15 g Total sugars (0 g Added sugars), 10 g Fiber, 46 g Total fat (23 g sat), 474 mg Sodium, ★★★★★ Vitamin A, B1 (thiamine), B3 (niacin), C, K, ★★★★ Vitamin B6, Iron, Magnesium, Potassium, ★★★ Vitamin E, ★★ Vitamin B2 (riboflavin), Folate, Phosphorus, Zinc, ★ Calcium

plant foods, fish oil **beneficial in pregnancy**

A diet rich in fiber, plant proteins, and healthy fats from fish oil offers significant benefits for mothers and their infants during pregnancy and breastfeeding, according to 2025 research. Gains include the prevention of fat accumulation, a stronger digestive system, and a reduction of infections. Participants also saw enhanced immunity.

SELECTED SOURCES **"A diet rich in fibre and vegetable protein during gestation and lactation shapes maternal immunity, intestinal microbiota and lipid metabolism"** by K. Rio-Aige et al., *eBioMedicine*, 2025 • **"A diet rich in vegetable protein and fiber helps maternal and infant health during pregnancy and breastfeeding,"** University of Barcelona, 9/10/25

Did You Know?

A new study found that children had fewer dental caries if their mothers took sufficient vitamin D supplementation during pregnancy. The research included more than 4,000 mother-child pairs.

SOURCE **"Vitamin D levels during pregnancy and dental caries in offspring"** by N. Xu et al., *JAMA Network Open*, 12/2/25

kudos for **kefir**

Kefir, a yogurt-like fermented milk drink, is known to have beneficial effects on the microbiota of the human gut. A small new study reinforced the positives in a group of healthy young adults. Participants drank about 8 ounces of kefir per day for six weeks. They saw a decrease in gastrointestinal symptoms along with reduced cholesterol and other benefits.

Kefir is readily available in most supermarkets and health-food stores. It comes plain or in many flavors.

SOURCE **"Effects of kefir consumption on gastrointestinal health, biochemical parameters, sleep, and mental wellbeing in healthy young adults: A randomised controlled trial"** by H. Bakirhan et al., *Journal of Nutrition*, 11/26/25

scrutinizing the **cereals**

The market shelves are lined with dozens of different cereals, but which are the healthiest? Nutritionist Adern Yu answered that question in a recent *New York Times* article: "Look for phrases like whole grain wheat, whole grain oats, whole grain corn, and whole grain brown rice on the ingredients list," Yu said. "And prioritize cereals that have those ingredients listed first, which signals that they are present in greater amounts."

Whole grains are excellent sources of fiber, B vitamins, iron, magnesium, and other key nutrients.

SOURCE **"Your top health questions of 2025"** by Julia Calderone, *New York Times*, wwww.NYTimes.com, 12/23/25

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BY LISA FABIAN

St. Patrick's Day

celebrate with Irish recipes

March can be fickle, with days of both mild and wild weather. Yet when it's still winter, but just barely spring, St. Patrick's Day arrives to enliven the month. Make food a part of your festivities with the following authentically Irish dishes.

Irish Soda-Bread Scones N V

From ***Passport to Flavor*** by Abby Cheshire ($29.99, Harper Celebrate, 2026)

40 min prep time
serves **8**

- 2 c all-purpose flour
- ⅓ c granulated sugar
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp kosher salt
- ½ c salted butter (1 stick), cold, cut into ¼-inch cubes
- ⅔ c raisins
- 1 Tbsp caraway seeds
- ⅔ c buttermilk
- 1 egg
- 2 Tbsp heavy whipping cream or milk, for brushing
- 1 tsp granulated sugar, for topping

1. Preheat oven to 375°.
2. In a large mixing bowl, add flour, sugar, baking powder, salt, and butter cubes. Combine with your fingers to create pea-size pieces.
3. Add raisins and caraway seeds to dough mixture, combining until raisins are coated.
4. In a medium bowl, whisk buttermilk and egg.
5. Add wet ingredients into dry ingredients, using a rubber spatula to gently mix until just incorporated.
6. Use two spoons to shape dough into dollops. Drop each of the 8 scones onto a large sheet pan lined with parchment paper.
7. Brush scones with cream or milk, and sprinkle sugar on top. Using a knife, make a cross on top.
8. Bake for 20 minutes or until golden brown.

Kitchen Note: In Irish baking tradition, a cross is often scored on scones before baking. Folklore says it was done to bless the bread or protect the household.

Per serving (made with milk): 307 Calories, 5 g Protein, 52 mg Cholesterol, 44 g Carbohydrates, 18 g Total sugars (9 g Added sugars), 2 g Fiber, 13 g Total fat (8 g sat), 209 mg Sodium, ★ Vitamin A, Calcium, Phosphorus

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My Mum's Irish Stew with Pearl Barley

From ***Clodagh's Happy Cooking*** by Clodagh McKenna ($29.99, Kyle Books, 2025)

4 hrs prep time
serves **4-6**

For the Stock

- 1 lamb bone
- 1 carrot, scrubbed and halved
- 1 onion, halved
- 1 bouquet garni*

For the Stew

- 1¾ oz butter
- 6 carrots, peeled and cut into chunks
- Sea salt flakes and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 onions, sliced
- 3 parsnips or turnips, peeled and cut into chunks
- 6 medium waxy potatoes, peeled and cut into large chunks
- 8 lamb cutlets
- 4¼ oz pearl barley
- Leaves from 2 thyme sprigs

1. First make stock. Place all ingredients in a saucepan and pour in 4½ pints of water. Bring to boil and simmer for as long as possible to bring out the flavor; try to give it at least 2–3 hours. Strain through a sieve into a large bowl.

2. Preheat oven to 340°.

3. Place a flameproof casserole over a medium heat and melt butter. Next add carrots, season with salt and pepper, and stir until they are a nice golden color. Remove to a plate and repeat process with onions, and then parsnips or turnips, and then potatoes, and finally lamb cutlets.

4. Spoon vegetables, lamb, and barley back into casserole, placing potatoes on top. Add thyme and cover with hot lamb stock. Cook in oven for 1½ hours and then serve straight from casserole.

*A bouquet garni is a bunch of herbs (typically parsley, thyme, and bay leaf) tied together and added to broths, soups, and stews for flavor.

Kitchen Note: This dish is a big Irish hug, based on a delicious stock made from a lamb bone with all the flavors of herbs and vegetables. Pearl barley is an ancient grain that gets plump with all the juices from the casserole.

Per serving (6 servings; made with parsnips): 125 Calories, 2 g Protein, 10 mg Cholesterol, 22 g Carbohydrates, 7 g Total sugars (0 g Added sugars), 6 g Fiber, 4 g Total fat (3 g sat), 246 mg Sodium, ★★★★★ Vitamin A, ★★ Vitamin C, K, ★ Vitamin B1 (thiamine), B6, E, Folate, Potassium

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continued from page 13

Boxty with Smoked Salmon N V

From ***Passport to Flavor*** by Abby Cheshire ($29.99, Harper Celebrate, 2026)

50 min prep time serves **4**

For the Boxty

- 2 c Yukon Gold potatoes (2 medium), peeled, medium diced
- 2 c russet potatoes (2 medium), peeled, shredded
- ½ c buttermilk
- 2 eggs
- ¾ c all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 Tbsp oil, divided, for pan-frying

For the Toppings

- 8 slices smoked salmon
- ¼ c crème fraîche
- 4 sprigs fresh dill
- 1 whole fresh lemon, cut into quarter wedges

1. In a medium pot, add the Yukon Gold potatoes and enough water to cover them by 1 inch. Bring to a boil on high until fork-tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, shred the raw russet potatoes using a box grater (or a food processor with a grater attachment). Spread shredded potatoes onto a large sheet tray lined with paper towels. Dry completely by pressing more paper towels on top.

3. Once Yukon Gold potatoes are cooked, drain and use a potato masher or a fork to mash them until smooth.

4. In a medium mixing bowl, add mashed/cooked potatoes, shredded/raw potatoes, buttermilk, and eggs. Use a fork to combine wet ingredients.

5. In a small mixing bowl, combine flour, baking powder, salt, and pepper. Use a fork to combine dry ingredients.

6. Add dry ingredients to wet ingredients. Mix gently, just until dry ingredients are incorporated.

7. Preheat a large skillet with 1 tablespoon of oil on medium heat.

8. Once hot, pan-fry first of 2 batches by spooning out 4 patties in 3½-inch-diameter discs and cooking for 3 minutes on first side and 2 minutes on second side or until golden brown. Remove to dry on a large sheet tray lined with paper towels. Add remaining tablespoon of oil and repeat for second batch of 4 patties.

9. Once pan-frying is complete, plate 2 boxty patties on each of 4 serving plates.

10. Top each boxty with 1 slice of smoked salmon, a dollop of crème fraîche, and a sprig of dill. Set a lemon wedge on each plate.

Kitchen Note: Made with grated and mashed potatoes, boxty is a traditional Irish potato pancake. Pan-fry some for guests and bring the sea to your table with smoked salmon on top. To finish off the boxty, add crème fraîche (sour cream's milder cousin). The combination will whisk you away to the Emerald Isle. Instead of using two different varieties of potatoes, you can use just one.

Per serving: 413 Calories, 21 g Protein, 103 mg Cholesterol, 50 g Carbohydrates, 4 g Total sugars (0 g Added sugars), 4 g Fiber, 15 g Total fat (4 g sat), 761 mg Sodium, ★★★★★ Vitamin B12, D, ★★★★ Vitamin B6, ★★★ Vitamin C, Phosphorus, ★★ Vitamin B2 (riboflavin), B3 (niacin), Potassium, ★ Vitamin B1 (thiamine), Calcium, Folate, Iron, Magnesium, Zinc

Parsnip-Carrot Mash

G N V

From the ***Taste for Life*** test kitchen

35 min prep time serves **6**

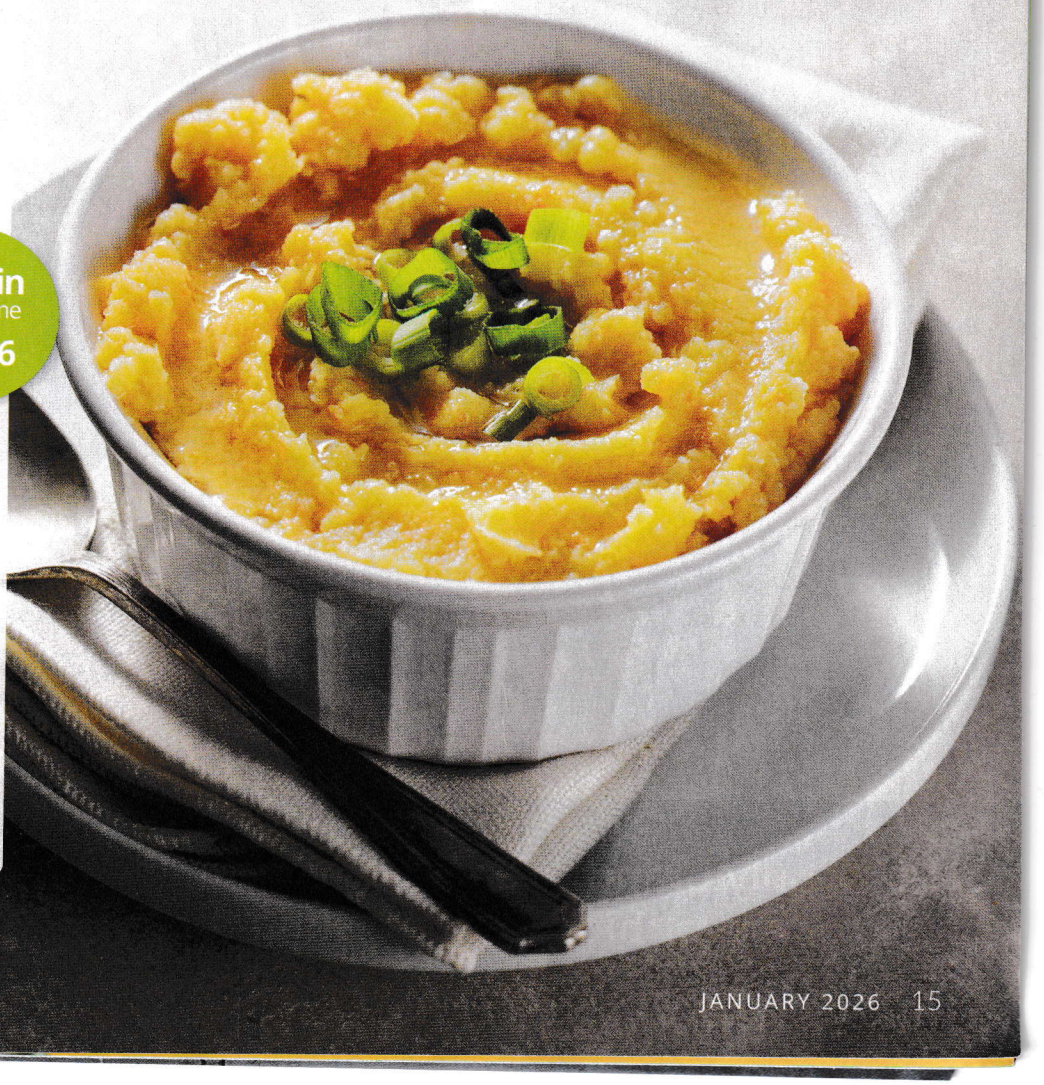
- 4 medium parsnips
- 4 large carrots
- 2 Tbsp butter
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1. Peel and dice parsnips and carrots. Add to a saucepan and cover with water.

2. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 15 to 20 minutes, until vegetables are very tender when pierced with the tip of a knife.

3. Drain parsnips and carrots. Place them back in saucepan. Add butter. Mash with a potato masher. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Per serving: 265 Calories, 5 g Protein, 32 mg Cholesterol, 14 g Carbohydrates, 9 g Total sugars (0 g Added sugars), 4 g Fiber, 23 g Total fat (3 g sat), 291 mg Sodium, ★★★★ Vitamin B2 (riboflavin), C, E, Magnesium, Phosphorus



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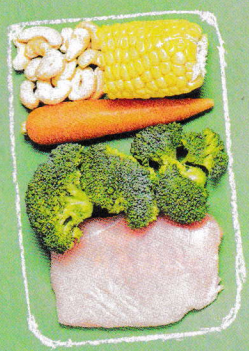

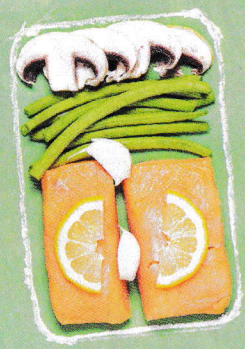
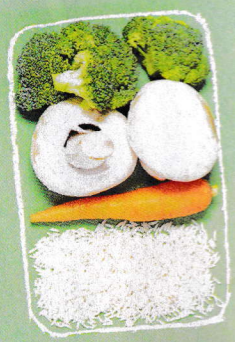

celebrate national nutrition month

choose healthful eating

"Discover the Power of Nutrition," this year's theme, emphasizes building "healthy habits into your day to help you feel great now and in the future," according to the academy. Here are some tips from www.**Eatright.org** to help you.

Put nutrition first

- ✔ Choose healthful foods from all food groups and mix up your choices to get a variety of nutrients.
- ✔ Avoid fad diets that recommend unnecessary restrictions.

Look for the right advice

- ✔ Find accurate sources for nutrition information.
- ✔ Receive personalized guidance from a registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) to meet your health goals.

Eat well regardless of income

- ✔ Seek meal-preparation tips that work for your budget.
- ✔ Take advantage of resources such as local food banks and, if you qualify for federal benefits, SNAP and WIC.
- ✔ Learn about and advocate for nutrition policies that serve you, your family, and community.

Healthy habits make you feel good

- ✔ Reduce the risk of foodborne illness with home food safety.
- ✔ Plan menus in advance to avoid mealtime stress.
- ✔ Include physical activity in ways that work for you.

In 1973, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics established March as National Nutrition Month. The organization invites everyone "to learn about making informed food choices and developing healthful eating and physical activity habits."

Eating well by the decades

In the teens and twenties, encourage strong and healthy bones by ensuring you get enough calcium.

The reproductive decades, the twenties and thirties, call for enough folate through diet or folic acid supplements to protect a baby from neural tube defects, such as spina bifida.

Vitamins, minerals, and fiber are important components of the diet in the next two decades. "Women and men who are 31 to 50 years old need about 25 and 31 grams [of fiber] per day, respectively," according to Eatright.org.

Both men and women run into body changes in the forties and fifties. Men need to look out for weight gain as calorie needs lessen. Physical activity can help prevent extra pounds from accumulating. Women experience perimenopause and menopause, which mean fluctuating hormones. Mindful eating and regular exercise help with metabolism and weight.

In the sixties and beyond, maintaining muscle and bone health relies on protein and strength-building exercise. To keep the brain and nervous system healthy, and continue making red blood cells, vitamin B12 is a vital nutrient. ●

SELECTED SOURCES **"Healthful habits,"** 2026; **"National Nutrition Month,"** 2026, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, www.Eatright.org

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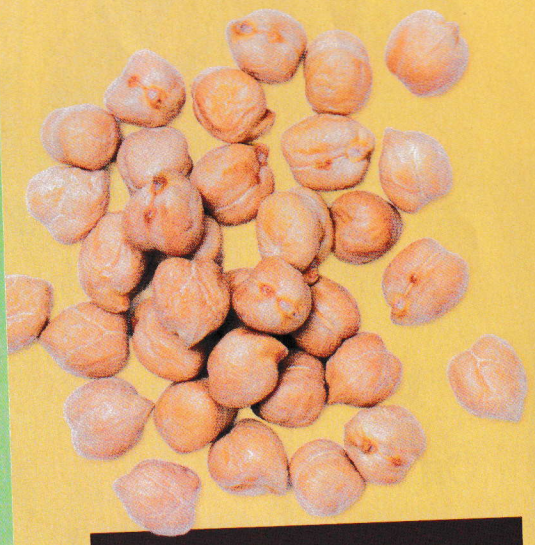
 BY *TASTE FOR LIFE* STAFF

feed your kidneys

foods that protect these organs

About one-third of adults with diabetes and one-fifth of those with high blood pressure may also have chronic kidney disease (CKD), according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). A family history, heart disease, and overweight or obesity are other risk factors, as are kidney infections and injuries.



A kidney-protective diet can help you "prevent, delay, or manage CKD," says the CDC. The National Kidney Foundation Patient Education Team notes that eating a well-balanced diet of nutritious foods—especially lower-sodium foods—"is one of the best things you can do to help stop or slow the progression of kidney disease."

Kidney-friendly food choices

Food choices depend on whether or not kidney disease is already present, lab values (such as potassium and phosphorus levels), and individual health needs. Always follow guidance from a healthcare provider or renal dietitian. With these precautions in mind, a kidney-friendly meal plan may include foods from the following groups:

Fruits: consider apples, berries (all types), cherries, pineapples.

Vegetables: lower-potassium options include cabbage, cauliflower, cucumbers, green beans, onions, and peppers. Veggies such as beans, leafy greens, squash, and root vegetables may need to be limited for some people with CKD.

Nuts and seeds: nuts and seeds are higher in potassium and phosphorus, so portion size and frequency should be guided by individual needs.

Whole grains: a great source of dietary fiber.

Animal proteins: eggs, fish, cheese (low phosphorus), shellfish, yogurt

Oils and fats: healthy oils and fats have a place in a kidney-friendly diet

Seasonings: herbs and spices add flavor without adding salt.

Other tips from the CDC

- ✔ Watch your weight.
- ✔ Engage in physical activity.
- ✔ Don't smoke.
- ✔ Follow your doctor's instructions for any medication you take.
- ✔ Have cholesterol checked regularly.

To drink or not?

Alcohol can harm the kidneys, making them less able to filter the blood and maintain the optimal amount of water in the body. Drinking can lead to dehydration, high blood pressure, and liver disease.

Guidelines of the National Kidney Foundation suggest checking with your doctor to see if it is safe for you to drink. If it is, be sure to drink in moderation (one to two drinks per day for men, and one for women and those over age 65).

SELECTED SOURCES **"Alcohol and your kidneys,"** National Kidney Foundation, www.kidney.org, 2026 • **"Preventing chronic kidney disease,"** US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov, 5/15/24 • **"Superfoods,"** National Kidney Foundation Patient Education Team, www.kidney.org, 12/6/23

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BY *TASTE FOR LIFE* STAFF

grow strong

gardening is great exercise!

A fitness-oriented lifestyle involves more than just going to the gym three times a week.

You've likely heard about developing habits such as using the stairs instead of an elevator and parking a few blocks from your destination. You can also use yard work and gardening to up your fitness level—while creating a more beautiful setting for your home.

Benefits for your body

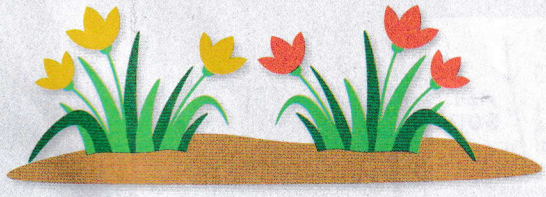
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says physical activity lowers the risk of having high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, depression, certain types of cancer, and premature death.

Burn calories. The number of calories you'll use up while gardening depends upon your age, size, and body composition. On average, you can burn 250 to 350 calories per hour mowing the lawn; 200 to 400, digging, planting, and weeding; and 350 to 450, raking.

Work muscles. Different gardening activities work different parts of the body. Squatting, instead of kneeling, when planting and weeding works your thigh muscles and glutes. Pulling weeds while on your knees works your abdominals, back, shoulders, and arms, which also benefit from digging, pruning, and even pushing the wheelbarrow.

And your mind

Besides the fitness benefits of maintaining a garden—the digging, planting, weeding, raking—gardening helps you cut the cords of technology and connect with yourself. Gardening is relaxing and helps boost endorphins.



How to get started

If you haven't been exercising regularly, start out slowly with just a few minutes of work the first day. Gradually increase the time until you reach 30 minutes. As with any exercise, warm up first (walking is good) and stretch when you're finished. Whenever possible, use hand tools instead of machines.

Keep your heart rate up by working at a steady pace, and don't perform the same task for more than 10 minutes at a time. Move from digging to weeding to raking, say, so you are not in the same position for a long time.

Breathe deeply while you work, and concentrate on using all your muscles, extending your range of motion with each movement. Pay attention to your body. You don't want to overexert, especially if you're new to gardening life. ●

SELECTED SOURCES **"Benefits of physical activity,"** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.CDC.gov, 10/4/25 • **"Dig into the benefits of gardening"** by L. Wimmer, www.MayoClinicHealthSystem.org, 7/12/22 • **"Gardening is exercise"** by D. Hickey, The National Gardening Association, www.Garden.org • **"Gardening and yard work: Exercise with a purpose"** by J. Corliss, Harvard Health Publishing, https://health.Harvard.edu, 10/1/24

Helpful accessories

With the following items on hand, you can prevent insect bites and sun damage; protect your hands and knees; stay hydrated; and take care of bruises.

- **Natural bug repellent.** Reapply as directed, especially on hot days.
- **Sun hat** and **sun block** to apply to all exposed areas (Don't forget the back of your neck!)
- **Gardening gloves**
- Padded **gardening mat** to kneel on
- A **water bottle.** Sip from it regularly while you're outdoors even if you don't feel thirsty.
- **Arnica gel** or cream for bruises—and for minor aches if you overdo it.

lentils

Lentils, like other pulses (seeds of legumes), are a versatile, affordable, highly nutritious, and easy-to-prepare ingredient found in cuisines around the world.

Rich in plant-based protein (12 grams per half-cup cooked), lentils have anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and cardioprotective properties. Their high fiber content aids digestion and weight management. The fiber in lentils also supports healthy blood sugar levels.

Packed with essential minerals like iron, magnesium, and potassium, lentils are also good source of folate, a B vitamin that is especially important during pregnancy.

Packaged lentils (dry or canned) come in a variety of colors and sizes, and they have a long shelf life, making them the perfect pantry staple. Cooked lentils make great additions to curries, soups, and salads—they can also be frozen and saved for later use.

SELECTED SOURCES **"About lentils,"** www.Lentils.org, 2026 • **"Health-promoting benefits of lentils: Anti-inflammatory and anti-microbial effects"** by R. Alexander et al., *Current Research in Physiology*, 3/5/24 • **"A review of the health benefits of processed lentils *(Lens culinaris* L.)"** by M.F. Dewan et al., *Legume Science*, 5/2/24

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BY EVA MILOTTE

brain freeze

smart ways to use your freezer

Be honest. You don't often think of your freezer until it's either not working, or a solid unidentifiable block of something has been unearthed from its interior.

The latter situation may not entirely be your freezer's fault. With some know-how, you can make your freezer work harder for you, so those instances of freezer-burnt food happen way less often.

The Big Chill

A full freezer is a happy freezer. When a freezer is on the emptier side, it has to work harder to keep its temperatures low. A well-stocked freezer maintains its chill through the many frozen items stored within. But you don't want a completely stuffed freezer, as airflow is needed to keep everything cold.

For the long-term safety of the foods within, keep your freezer set to 0°, or as close to this temperature as possible.

How to Freeze Food

Just about any food item can be frozen, except canned goods and eggs still in their shells. But just because something can be frozen, doesn't mean it should be. Take lettuce, sour cream, and mayonnaise, for example. The consistency and quality of these items will be altered once they're frozen.

Prevent individual items, like berries or pineapple chunks, from freezing in a solid block by spreading them in a single layer on a sheet pan. Place the pan in the freezer until the fruit freezes (this can take up to 24 hours), then ransfer the frozen fruit to a labeled freezer-safe storage container or bag, and place it back in the freezer.

Freezing items will not destroy their nutrients. When foods are frozen at their peak quality, they will emerge better tasting and with more vitamins and minerals than foods that are frozen at the end of their quality of life.

You can freeze meat its original packaging, but keep in mind that the packaging may be permeable to air. This can affect the long-term quality of the meat once it's frozen. Consider putting the meat and its packaging in a sealed freezer bag to give it more protection. If the original package has torn or opened in the freezer, the food is still safe to eat. Just wrap the original package in a freezer-safe bag.

Organize, Organize, Organize

To make your life easier, invest in freezer-safe shelves or bins to make stacking and storing a breeze. Consider one bin for nuts, flour, and butter, another for vegetables, one for fruits, and another for frozen entrées. Label items with the contents and the date they're placed in the freezer.

Burn, Baby, Burn

Freezer burn does not make food unsafe. It simply dries it out in certain areas. You can cut away freezer-burnt sections before or after cooking.

For Safety's Sake

Food that freezes quickly is safer. If your freezer has a "quick-freeze" shelf, put it to good use. Don't stack packages on top of each other when freezing them. Lay them out in a single layer. They can be stacked once they're frozen solid.

Go slow when defrosting by using the refrigerator to defrost. From 40° to 140° is considered the danger zone for foods to be defrosted. Small items will typically defrost overnight. Plan on a day or two for larger goods like turkeys, which take one day to defrost for every 5 pounds of weight.

Is It Safe?

If there's an outage or someone left the freezer door open, food inside the freezer may still be safe to eat if you can see ice crystals on the items.

Discard any food that has been at 40° or warmer for more than two hours. If the ice cream has melted, it needs to go for quality's sake. ●

SELECTED SOURCES **"The better way to freeze food (so it lasts even longer)"** by B. Gold, www.RealSimple.com, 2/3/25 • **"Freezing and food safety,"** USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service, www.fsis.usda.gov, 8/9/24

30 min prep time
serves 4

Chicken & Sweetcorn Soup D N

From ***Spinning Plates*** by Anna Stanford ($26.99, Hamlyn, 2025)

- 1¾ pints good-quality chicken stock (either homemade* or store-bought)
- 10½ oz cooked chicken, chopped or shredded, divided
- 3½ oz sweetcorn kernels, either canned, frozen or cut off fresh cobs, divided
- 3 Tbsp soy sauce or tamari
- 2 tsp sriracha (or use sweet chili sauce)
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 2 tsp chopped fresh root ginger
- 2 eggs, whisked
- 5 green onions, trimmed and chopped
- Sesame oil, for drizzling (optional)

1. To make soup, add stock, half the chicken and half the sweetcorn to a pan, together with soy sauce, sriracha, garlic and ginger. Bring to a simmer. Remove from heat and either blitz with a handheld blender, or transfer to a large blender, blitz, and then return to pan.

2. Add remaining chicken and sweetcorn. Bring to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes, and then add whisked eggs. Stir and cook gently for 3 minutes so eggs disperse in stock, cook evenly, and resemble threads. Serve in bowls and finish with green onions and sesame oil, if using.

Kitchen Note: This is a spin on a chicken and sweetcorn soup you may have tried from your local Chinese restaurant. Whenever you roast a chicken, put the cooled, stripped carcass in the freezer. When you have a couple of carcasses, add them to a pan straight from the freezer with an onion, carrot, herbs, peppercorns and plenty of water. Simmer to create your own stock. But if that's all too much, just use good-quality store-bought stock!

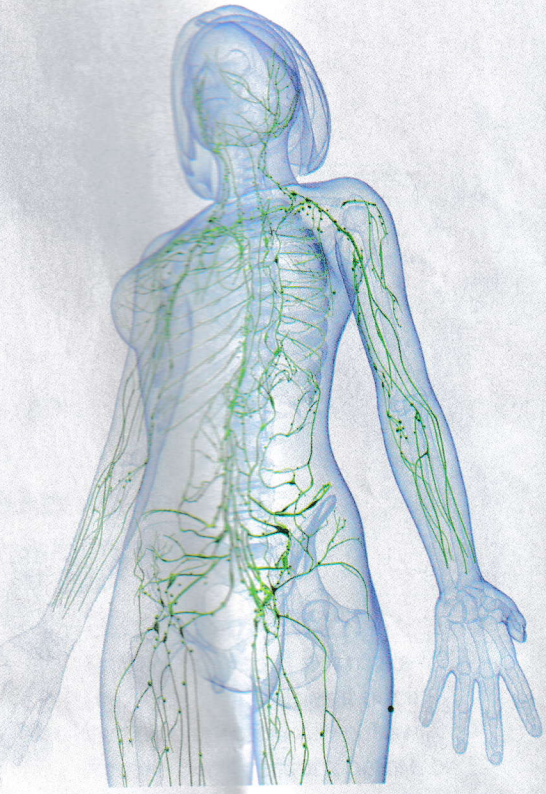
*To make your own stock, cover the cooked chicken carcasses with 3½ pints of water in a large pan. Add 1 chopped onion, 1 chopped carrot, 1 teaspoon black peppercorns, 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar, and a few sprigs of any fresh herbs you have. Bring to the boil, and then reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, for 2 hours. Or, better still, cook covered in a slow cooker on medium or in the oven at 300° for 2 for 6 hours. Strain the stock before use, and either use straight away or cool and transfer to an airtight container. The stock will keep in the refrigerator for up to 3 days and it can be frozen for up to 3 months (defrost overnight in the refrigerator before use).

Per serving (made with soy sauce and sriracha): 303 Calories, 24 g Protein, 142 mg Cholesterol, 15 g Carbohydrates, 6 g Total sugars (0 g Added sugars), 1 g Fiber, 16 g Total fat (5 g sat), 1,112 mg Sodium, ★★★★★ Vitamin B3 (niacin), ★★★ Vitamin B2 (riboflavin), K, ★★ Vitamin B6, Phosphorus, ★ Vitamin B1 (thiamine), B12, Folate, C, Iron, Magnesium, Potassium, Zinc

 BY LISA FABIAN

go with the *flow*

self-care for the lymphatic system



It may not have the strong emotional appeal of the heart or the strength and sturdiness of the bones, but the lymph system needs attention too. Fortunately, it's getting its due, as more is discovered about its supreme importance in keeping us well.

Located outside the body's cells, the lymphatic system is a fluid space. Twice as long as the blood network, the lymphatic system circulates right alongside it, acting as a drain for cellular waste. It also acts as a defender, supporting the immune system by trapping pathogens and filtering them out.

Unlike the blood system with the heart, the lymphatic system does not have a natural pump. What it has are series of ducts and nodes that help move fluid along. The lymph nodes are located throughout the body, including under the armpits, in the neck, around the groin, and in the digestive system.

When we're dehydrated, tired, lacking in sleep, full of toxins, or fighting an infection, our lymphatic system struggles. This causes stagnation and results in painful swelling and inflammation. Here are some common signs of congested lymph.

- Acne and other skin issues
- Cellulite
- Constipation
- Earaches
- Fluid retention
- Food and chemical sensitivities
- Inflamed tonsils
- Insomnia
- Nasal congestion
- Pain
- Sore throat

Try this easy and quick test. Depress the skin on the back of your hand with your thumb. If it takes three or more seconds for the skin to return to its normal color after being pressed, your lymphatic system is most likely sluggish.

What to do about underperforming lymph?

Physical exercise, hot yoga, sauna, infrared light therapy, dry skin brushing, rebounding on a trampoline, deep belly breathing, and massage all stimulate lymph flow.

Massage is a particularly healing and effective option, as it helps stagnant lymph move through the tissues. A professional licensed lymphatic massage therapist gently massages the areas over the lymph canals and encourages the emptying of the lymph nodes.

You can also try self-massage. But keep in mind that it's best to work gently when massaging lymph. Use a light, stroking motion.

If swelling is in the arms, gently massage your skin upward toward the armpits. If fluid retention is in the legs, stroke upward toward the groin area.

Major strokes should be directed toward the kidneys to help with waste removal.

Other areas to concentrate on include along the jawline and down each side of the neck. Massage around the bikini line area. This is where the leg creases when you lift it. Affected areas are often tender to the touch, and the skin may appear overstretched.

It's important to note that if your lymphatic system is too congested and your kidneys aren't functioning properly, a lymphatic massage may be stressful for your body. ●

SELECTED SOURCES **"Lymphatic drainage massage,"** Cleveland Clinic, https://my.ClevelandClinic.org, 9/19/24 • **"Lymphatic self care: Boosting your body's ability to heal itself,"** American Massage Therapy Association, www.amtamassage.org • **"Manual lymph drainage"** by M. Miller, MD Anderson Cancer Center, www.MDAnderson.org, 6/10/25

Massaging with essential oils

With antimicrobial, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties, essential oils help with blood circulation, reduce tissue swelling, stimulate lymphatic movement, lessen toxins, and decongest lymph. Essential oils also help open drainage channels in the body, like those in the lymphatic system.

Lymph-loving essential oils include cedarwood atlas, cypress, frankincense, geranium, ginger, grapefruit, juniper berry, lemon, lime, rosemary, spearmint, sweet orange, tea tree, and wintergreen.

Follow the ratio of one drop of essential oil per one teaspoon of carrier oil, unless a recipe instructs otherwise. Dilute the essential oils by adding them to carrier oils such as jojoba, almond, avocado, grape seed, or fractionated coconut.

Always perform a patch test on the skin before using essential oils. Make sure there's no redness, burning, or irritation on the skin, or any breathing issues upon smelling the intended oil. Avoid if any of these occur.

For a **lymph toxin expeller**, blend the following in a dropper bottle. Use small amounts when massaging.

7 drops juniper berry essential oil
5 drops lemon essential oil
6 drops black pepper essential oil
1 ounce avocado oil

For a **stimulating massage for the lymph**, blend the following in a dropper bottle. Use small amounts when massaging.

5 drops geranium essential oil
6 drops wintergreen essential oil
2 drops tea tree essential oil
1 ounce grapeseed oil

Other ways to obtain essential oils' benefits for the lymph include adding a small amount to a bath, diffusing in a diffuser, or mixing a few drops into a body wash. Always dilute essential oils with a carrier oil before applying to skin or using in a bath.

SELECTED SOURCES ***The Complete Book of Essential Oils and Aromatherapy*** by Valerie Ann Worwood ($29.95, New World Library, 2016) • **"Essential oils for lymph nodes . . . ,"** **www.**EssentialOilBenefits.com, 11/22/20

what comes next?

Look at the pictures and choose the one you think comes next in the pattern!

Answer: Leaf, Hat, Branch, Tree, Mushroom

"The pessimist complains about the wind;

the optimist expects it to change;

the realist *adjusts* the sails."

—William Arthur Ward

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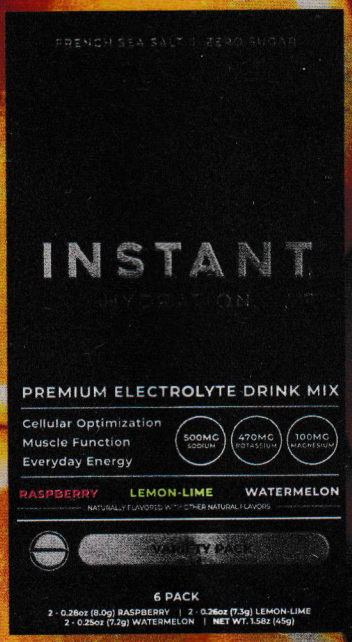

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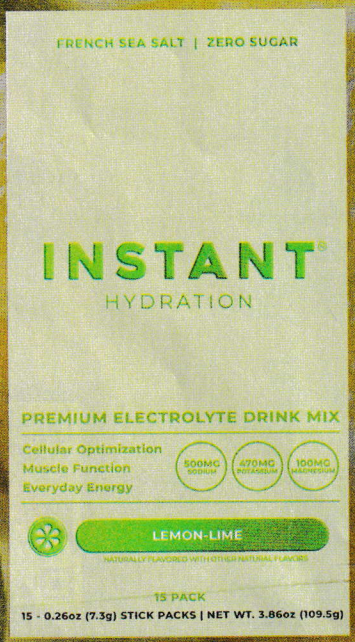

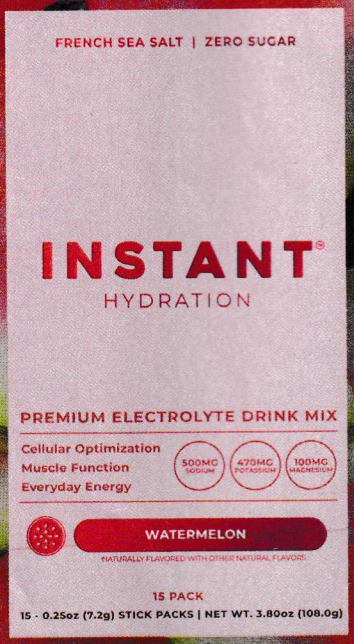

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